

AMERICA'S
PrepareAthon![™]
BE SMART. TAKE PART. PREPARE.



MEDIA EVENT PLANNING GUIDE

PLAN AND IMPLEMENT A SUCCESSFUL MEDIA EVENT



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Note: This guide offers general reference information for America's PrepareAthon! participants without warranty or guarantee of any kind. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) does not guarantee media coverage or participant attendance for America's PrepareAthon! events. FEMA does not endorse any non-government entities, organizations, or services.



SECTION 1: THE PURPOSE OF THE MEDIA GUIDE

This media guide is designed to help you and your team promote and publicize your America's PrepareAthon! drill, activity, or event. This document will walk you through the basics of media planning, outreach to stakeholders, and promotion.

You'll find information on how to:

- Create a media plan for your America's PrepareAthon! event;
- Develop messaging for media releases, media advisories, and other announcements about your event;
- Create a media list;
- Establish relationships and partnerships with local media;
- Coordinate and execute your media event;
- Use social media to complement your traditional media outreach efforts; and
- Use a media event planning checklist.

Whether your organization is planning to hold an event, drill, or other activity promoting preparedness, the information in this guide will help you construct a solid game plan for broadcasting your commitment to America's PrepareAthon!

You can also refer to the *Communications Toolkit*, available at www.ready.gov/prepare, which is a companion piece designed to provide you with sample messaging, social media tips, and tools designed to save you time and make your outreach easier before and during your day of action.

SECTION 2: CREATE MESSAGING AND PUBLICITY MATERIALS FOR YOUR MEDIA EVENT

In publicity and promotional terms, a message is simply a clear, basic explanation of the issue or event you want to communicate to the public and the media. It's essential to establish two or three key messages for your event to ensure that target audiences receive the message and publicity and promotional materials remain consistent. When you have a well-defined message, members and leaders within your organization can effectively communicate about the event, and the media will have a good understanding of what it is you're doing. You'll want to include aspects of this messaging in any materials you use to talk about your event, including press releases, media advisories, press conference announcements, invitations, newsletters, letters to the editor, or proclamations issued by elected officials.

Creating messaging is simple—all you need to do is to identify and outline the "Five W's" of your event: **who** your event involves, **what** the purpose of your event is, **where** your event is being held, **when** your event is being held, and **why** the event is important to your community. In short, what do you want the headline or lead to be? What do you want the reporter to focus on?

At the end of this guide, you will find templates for materials that can be easily tailored for your America's PrepareAthon! event, as well as basic guidelines on how and where to use them.



SECTION 3: DEVELOP A MEDIA EVENT AND A MEDIA PLAN

Getting your America's PrepareAthon! event covered by the media in your community requires a good strategy, and developing a media plan should be your first step. Start by brainstorming ideas for a newsworthy media event. Settle on one plan that you think will appeal to your local media, and then create a timeline to help you execute this plan.

PLAN YOUR MEDIA EVENT

A planned media event will give your organization an opportunity to proactively promote your America's PrepareAthon! activity and draw attention to your efforts to prepare your community for disasters.

The following are components of a planned media event:

- **Identify a drill or activity that would be of interest to the media:** A successful media event must have a strong visual component and a human interest hook. An event can take place at your business, school, or organization and can highlight an exercise, drill, or other activity you're undertaking to increase your disaster preparedness. Think about how you can incorporate your employees, students, or members to add a human element to the story. The location of the event should be accessible to the media and create a visual setting for your story.
- **Issue a press release:** Create and distribute a media or press release, or a simple media advisory, inviting news cameras to capture photos or video of your event. Identify the "Five W's" of your event: who your event involves, what the purpose of your event is, where your event is being held, when your event is being held, and clearly outline why the media should take interest. Send the press release or media advisory a week or two prior to your event and plan to follow up with reminders to the media in the days leading up to the event.
- **Pitch a feature story:** Identify news outlets in your community to pitch a specific and/or unique story as a way to showcase your event. Identify reporters or news outlets that may have a particular interest in an aspect of your event and offer up a subject matter expert or visual that will appeal to that reporter/outlet. Feature stories can run on the days leading up to your event, on the day of your event, or even a day or two after your event.
- **Support your event on social media:** Create posts for Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or other social media platforms that your organization uses. You can tailor posts to attract or inform your community about your event, seek public participation, and/or you can simply use this medium to talk about what your organization is doing to prepare for a disaster. News organizations often use social media to find story ideas, so be sure to follow the media outlets on your social media channels and encourage your followers to share your content. You can refer to the *Communications Toolkit* (www.ready.gov/prepare) for sample messaging, social media tips, and tools.
- **Promote your event after the fact:** Post information about the success of your event through social media channels after the event. You can also research community newspapers or local blogs that accept pre-written stories and submit a piece on your event. Include photos and quotes from participants or your organization's leadership. Sometimes the media won't come to you, but you can still put your event in the public sphere.

Example: The University of Kansas plans a "Ready Campus" tornado drill to promote student and faculty disaster preparedness.

- Visual components include the backdrop of a university campus, a press conference featuring university leaders, and faculty and students as they practice identifying and seeking shelter during a mock tornado warning scenario.
- The human interest component focuses on the students and what preparing for a tornado means to them personally, as well as university administrators and what preparedness means for the campus.



- Two weeks prior to the event, the university distributes a media release announcing the campus-wide tornado drill, inviting the local media and students to attend the event.
- The university has identified a student whose family survived a tornado because they practiced going to their protective location. The university pitches a local newspaper reporter on following the student through the campus-wide drill as she explains how her family prepared for the tornado and what it means to practice preparedness at home and school.
- In the days leading up to the event, messages supporting and promoting the event (targeted at both the media and the public) are posted on the university's social media channels.
- Two or three days before the event, the university sends a follow-up media advisory, makes phone calls to reporters, or sends email reminders to news outlets about the tornado drill event and the story opportunities available to the media.
- The day after the event, the university shares news stories about the event—or their own pictures, messages, or anecdotes about the success of the tornado drill—on its social media channels.

CREATE A MEDIA PLAN

Once you've decided what your media event is going to be, it's time to put together a plan. The sample timeline and plan below can be tailored and used in executing your media plan. Your timeline should include deadlines for securing your event, creating a media list, and creating and distributing publicity materials, as well as key dates for social media posts and media outreach.

TIMEFRAME	OBJECTIVE
One month prior to the media event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Identify aspects of your America's PrepareAthon! event that will be interesting to news outlets—exciting visuals, rarely seen emergency planning operations, human interest stories, a well-known spokesperson, a unique subject matter expert, information that has mass public appeal, etc. ■ Begin identifying the media outlets in your community that you want to work with in promoting your event. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Think about the news outlets in your community that have the largest reach—daily newspapers, talk radio programs, or network television stations are the biggest influencers. 2. Identify secondary news outlets in your community—neighborhood newspapers, public access television stations, bloggers, or other places that post local information. ■ Create a media list for your event—research reporters, columnists, talk show hosts, editors, and producers from your list of news outlets and gather their email addresses and phone numbers.
Three weeks prior to your event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Identify and secure the schedules of spokespeople, subject matter experts, or other individuals who are crucial to your event. ■ Begin thinking about whether there are any feature stories you can pitch to specific reporters or news outlets. ■ Create a draft media release, media advisory, invitations, or other announcements for your event and have them approved by your organization's leadership.



TIMEFRAME	OBJECTIVE
Two weeks prior to your event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reach out to reporters or news outlets and ask your media contacts how they prefer to receive media releases and other communications. Let them know you'll be following up with more information soon. Once you've identified who you'll be working with and how they wish to receive information, begin talking to them about your ideas and deliver your pitch. Distribute an initial media or press release, media advisory, and invitation (if warranted) for your event. Begin talking about your event on your organization's social media channels.
One week prior to your event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirm and schedule interviews, photo opportunities, or other components of your feature stories with the reporters who've accepted your pitches. Prepare a media advisory, emails, or scripts for phone calls for use in reminding news outlets about your event next week. Continue talking about your event on your organization's social media channels. Confirm any remaining logistical or technical components of your event and create a timeline for the day of your event to share with your organization's leadership, speakers, and other crucial participants. Prepare your spokespeople, or anyone else from your organization who may be featured in media coverage, for the event. Make sure they know what to expect, what to say, and how to present themselves.
Two or three days before your event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distribute your reminder media advisory; send emails to news outlets; or place personal phone calls to reporters, editors, or producers and confirm their plans to attend your event. Continue talking about your event on your organization's social media channels.
The day of your event and the days following your event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with the media in attendance at your event and ensure that they're getting everything they need for their stories. Post photos and anecdotes about the success of your event on your organization's social media channels. Monitor media coverage of your event to ensure its accuracy; share links to this coverage with your organization's leadership and on your social media channels.

SECTION 4: DEVELOP A MEDIA LIST, CONTACTS, AND RELATIONSHIPS

When you don't normally work with the media, the thought of reaching out to news outlets can be a little intimidating. In this section, we've outlined information, tips, and best practices to help guide you as you identify news outlets to work with and then begin to develop contacts and relationships with local journalists.

TYPES OF MEDIA OUTLETS TO CONSIDER

"Media" is a term that keeps getting broader as technology continues to expand its definition; as a rule, media outlets enable mass communication. Traditional media outlets include print, television, and radio; however, with expanding technology, digital and web-based media outlets—or "new media"—are becoming more common. Below are basic descriptions of the types of media outlets you'll want to research and pursue.



Finding the media outlets in your state and your specific market is easy. A simple Internet search is the best way to start. For example, type in key words “TV stations in Michigan” and a number of websites come up with this information. For one-stop shopping, you can also try U.S. Newspapers Lists (USNPL) at www.usnpl.com. This website provides a comprehensive list of daily, weekly, and college newspapers, as well as TV and radio stations for every state. It also provides a direct link to each outlet's Facebook and Twitter pages. It's easy to navigate and can save you time searching. Other resources include:

NewsLink: www.newslink.org

Radio Locator: www.radio-locator.com

Print

Print is a broad field that distributes information through paper products such as newspapers, magazines, books, and flyers. In the last decade, the print industry suffered circulation declines due to the increased popularity of the Internet and increasing costs for paper and ink. Many major market newspapers have downsized, reduced their paper size, or gone out of business completely. In recent years, traditional newspapers have become more competitive by offering web or Internet-based services and online newspapers. This hybrid type of media combines both new media and traditional print media concepts.

Television

In most TV markets, there are four news-affiliated stations, including NBC, CBS, ABC, and FOX. In larger TV markets, networks like the CW Network or Univision may also have a local news presence. In some larger markets of the United States, regional cable news outlets operate on a local level (e.g., New England Cable, Tampa Bay Cable), but most local television stations are broadcast affiliates of the big four mentioned above.

Radio

There are approximately a dozen big companies that dominate the sound of American radio. The leading radio companies are Clear Channel, CBS, and Entercom. Other big radio companies include Emmis, Cumulus, Beasley, Bonneville, and Radio One. Radio has traditionally made its revenue through advertising but is now exploring new revenue streams involving digital media. In some larger markets, radio stations will have an internal local news operation. In medium and smaller markets, the news operation could be the responsibility of one person or could be provided to the station by an outside news service. In some markets, the same company owns both a local radio and a local TV station.

Digital Media

The term “digital media” refers to online news sources and social media platforms. Websites like Yahoo! and Google are leading suppliers of Internet news, but all media outlets have an online presence in today's news landscape. In addition to traditional news outlets, social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Pinterest are also important to the media world because they efficiently bring together people of shared interests and are a vehicle for quickly spreading information. Digital media can also include blogs and websites that don't necessarily belong to a traditional news outlet but help spread news just the same. All traditional local and national media outlets push news content and information out through their own websites and social media channels, so it's important to ask your media contacts how you can access their digital media resources to tell your story.



DEVELOP A MEDIA LIST AND IDENTIFY MEDIA CONTACTS

Before you begin cold-calling media outlets, first check whether someone in your organization already has a local media list. If not, you can start the process by identifying news outlets in your community that cover general news or specific stories related to weather, disasters, and emergency preparedness. Think about the major newspaper in town, and major television and radio stations, as well as smaller community news organizations, websites, or blogs that you may be able to tap for coverage.

After you've made a list of the news organizations you'd like to target in your community, research their websites to find the following information:

- The name and type of media outlet (print, radio, television, and online/new media) and the outlet's main phone number and website address.
- Names, phone numbers, and email addresses of reporters who cover general news, city/town issues, weather, disasters, or emergency preparedness.
- Names, phone numbers, and email addresses for news desks, producers, or editors of television or radio programs you think would be a good fit for your story, or specific newspaper sections or columns that would similarly provide a good fit.

CONTACT THE MEDIA AND BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

Once you've created a list of local news organizations, you can begin contacting the media. It's worthwhile to send out an email or make phone calls as an introduction. Doing this will help your local media contacts become familiar with your name and the event that you're going to be promoting. A short, basic introduction is all that's needed. Ask your media contacts how they prefer to receive media releases and other communications and let them know you'll be following up with more information soon. It's also a good idea to follow the news outlets and specific reporters you're hoping to work with on Twitter and Facebook. Taking this simple step is an easy way to monitor what these outlets and reporters are covering. You'll be able to get a feel for how your contacts report their stories and what kind of information might be of interest.

It's important to be persistent with the media without becoming a nuisance. After making an initial introduction to your media contacts, follow up when you have a concrete timeline for your event (in the suggested timeline, this would occur about two weeks prior to your event); if you're not making any headway with your contacts, feel free to check in again after a few days, but try to avoid pestering your contacts with daily calls or emails. When sending emails, make sure your contacts have a pretty good idea what you're writing about. Avoid using vague subject lines and get right to the point in the body of the email. If you're sending a media release or media advisory, be sure to paste the information into the body of the email so that it's immediately accessible to the reporter.

Below are some additional tips to help you determine the best ways to contact specific types of media outlets.

CONTACTING PRINT MEDIA

Most daily newspapers have a news assignment editor to review media releases and media advisories. It's also common for newspapers to have identified staffers with regular "beats" (e.g., education, city police/fire, health, sports). A newspaper with a larger market might have someone assigned to cover homeland security and disaster preparedness; smaller newspapers or weeklies are less likely to have such broad coverage but may cover more community events than a major, daily publication.

It's a good practice to call or email the print media contacts you've identified and ask who would most likely cover your type of event. You can score extra points by asking what time of day reporters are generally on deadline to file their stories; avoid calling during these timeframes and you'll stand a better chance of getting the reporter's full attention.



CONTACTING A TV STATION

Stations with early morning and late evening newscasts are usually staffed 24 hours a day. Small- and medium-sized market stations may have reduced hours based around news times. Media events that occur before 11 a.m. are usually covered on the noon and early afternoon newscasts, between 4 p.m. and 6 p.m. Know your local TV stations' broadcast schedule and avoid contacting the station in the hour leading up to those times; reporters and assignment editors will be focused on their deadlines and won't be interested in chatting about upcoming stories. Additional coverage may also be included on the station's website. It is important to understand the limitations and preferences of your local TV stations before scheduling a news conference or press event. Another option for receiving coverage from a TV station is to establish a partnership with the station's meteorologist or weather personality.

CONTACTING A RADIO STATION

Like television stations, radio outlets generally have news or assignment desks and producers who oversee the content of specific shows. When contacting a radio station, it's important to first take a look at the station's website and determine what kind of stories they cover and what their featured shows are. You should also be able to find contact information for assignment desks and producers on the station's website. Because radio is heard and not seen, most radio station news operations conduct interviews over the phone versus in person or in the studio. Most radio stations have a small news staff and can't always send a reporter to cover news events in person. However, you can ask if the station is able to offer an interview before or after your event instead. Unless you're contacting an all-news station, most news programs or interview opportunities are provided during the peak morning and afternoon "drive times." Peak drive times typically fall between 5 a.m. and 9 a.m., and between 4 p.m. and 7 p.m.

CONTACTING NEW MEDIA

When working with traditional media outlets, it's likely that your event will be covered on those outlets' websites. When thinking about identifying other new media organizations that aren't affiliated with a traditional news source, you're likely to have better luck getting coverage on websites and blogs that are specific to your community. It's difficult for smaller markets to receive any substantial media coverage from large, national new media organizations. To contact new media outlets, simply look for email addresses or phone numbers listed on the organization's website and reach out directly.

SECTION 5: CHECKLIST FOR PLANNING A MEDIA EVENT

1. DETERMINE WHAT YOUR MEDIA EVENT WILL BE

- ☐ Brainstorm ideas for a media event with your leadership and communications team. Ask yourself if your ideas are newsworthy and/or of significant interest to the general public.
- ☐ Determine whether your event will include a high-profile stakeholder or other partners. Reach out to them to collaborate on an ideal timeframe and location.
- ☐ Determine whether your event will include a press conference, or whether it will be a photo opportunity with a subject matter expert who is available for on-camera interviews.
- ☐ Select a location for your media event. Ideal locations are visually appealing, will showcase some type of action (not just "talking heads" at a podium), and are easily accessible to the media.
- ☐ Identify pertinent agencies and organizations to include as partner presenters and organizers for your event.



2. LOCK IN YOUR MEDIA EVENT

- ☐ Confirm the date, time, and location for your media event. When considering the time, keep in mind that you'll have a better chance of getting cameras at your event if you avoid holding it during the major news cycles (i.e., mornings between 5 a.m. and 9 a.m. or after 4 p.m. in most news markets). In larger TV markets, 11 a.m. is a desirable time to conduct an event. This will increase the likelihood of live coverage during the mid-day newscasts, followed by additional coverage during the early evening newscasts.
- ☐ Check community calendars in your area, chamber of commerce business calendars, and/or dates for other major events in your region (e.g., sporting events, political events) to make sure the date of your media event doesn't conflict with other significant, newsworthy happenings that might draw attention away from your event.
- ☐ Settle on a spokesperson(s) or official(s) who will speak at the event and/or serve as a subject matter expert for on-camera, print, and other interviews.
- ☐ Confirm your speaker's availability and lock in the date and time on his or her calendar.
- ☐ Have an initial internal discussion about event logistics. Start thinking about whether you'll have access to electrical power. Are there specific things you need to plan for when using an indoor versus an outdoor location? Is a podium, microphone, or sound system needed? Are there costs associated with the location? Consider a location with adequate parking spaces to accommodate media vehicles.

3. PLAN FOR ANNOUNCING YOUR MEDIA EVENT

- ☐ Plan to send a media release announcing your event two to three weeks in advance. A release with a longer lead time will get lost in the busy newsroom shuffle, and any major announcement or event will need at least a two-week lead time to receive maximum coverage.
- ☐ Create an initial media release outlining your event and include a succinct, compelling message that describes why the event is worthy of news coverage. Be sure to allow enough time for content approval from your organization's leadership and any partners you're working with. (Note: A customizable media release template is provided in this guide.)
- ☐ Determine who the most appropriate contact will be for questions from the media about the event.
- ☐ Identify appropriate contacts to send the media release to and build a media list.

4. ANNOUNCE YOUR EVENT

- ☐ Distribute your media release to media contacts via email. If possible, post a link to the media release on your organization's website and social media channels. Ask partners, members, or staff to share or retweet these posts and/or post links and information about the event on their own platforms.
- ☐ Follow up the media release distribution with personal phone calls or emails to key media and gauge their interest in covering the event. Provide reporters and editors with additional background information in order to help make their decision to cover the event easier. For example, if a reporter is not convinced that preparedness is a topic of public interest, provide statistics or stories that paint a picture of what preparedness means to your community.

5. PRIORITIZE ACTIVITIES FOR 7 TO 10 DAYS PRIOR TO YOUR EVENT

- ☐ Reach out to key media and ask if reporters, editors, or photographers are interested in setting up a one-on-one interview with a speaker, subject matter expert, or spokesperson before or after your event. Setting a specific time will help ensure the reporter attends the event, which will essentially ensure placement and coverage.
- ☐ Create talking points and/or a script outline for speakers to use in preparation for your event. Remarks should be brief and should highlight the key elements of your event. If more than one person will speak at your event, divide up the key elements so that each person has something important to say.



- ☐ Create a media advisory that will remind news outlets about your event, and distribute it two or three days prior to your event. Be sure to highlight the photo opportunity involved. Many news organizations will decide whether to send a crew in the days leading up to your event, and compelling visuals will be key in that decision. (Note: A customizable media advisory/photo opportunity template is provided in this guide.)
- ☐ Create an internal event timeline that will be used to inform speakers and your organization's leadership on the flow of events.
- ☐ Two or three days prior to your event, review talking points and the event timeline with speakers and make any necessary adjustments.
- ☐ Finalize event location logistics. Confirm whether you'll have access to electrical power, and consider the following: Are there specific things you need to plan for when using an indoor versus an outdoor location? Is a podium, microphone, or sound system needed? Do you need tables, chairs, or water for the speakers and attendees? Do you need logo placards or banners?

6. FOCUS ON THE FINAL DETAILS FOR THE DAY OF YOUR EVENT

- ☐ If any staging or set-up is required for your media event, make sure that it's completed at least one hour before anyone is expected to arrive. (This includes setting up the podium, sound system, tables, chairs, and banners.)

7. MANAGE ALL MOVING PARTS DURING THE MEDIA EVENT

- ☐ Ask your spokesperson, speakers, and/or partners to arrive at least 15 minutes before the start of the event, and provide a quick briefing on the timeline of the event, the topics that will be discussed, photo opportunities, and any other important issues. If possible, let these participants know which media outlets are expected to attend, and pass along any helpful information about who they might find themselves talking to (e.g., "John Smith from the local CBS affiliate will be here, and he is skeptical about the importance of preparedness," or "Mary Johnson from *The Daily News* has a daughter who was affected by Superstorm Sandy").
- ☐ Appoint a representative from your organization to greet the media as they arrive for the event, and to keep track of requests for follow-up photo opportunities/interviews with your spokesperson, speakers, or event attendees following the formal announcement/remarks.
- ☐ Begin your media event at its appointed starting time. If you're holding a press conference at the beginning of the event, you or a spokesperson should approach the podium or gathered group, welcome the attendees, and introduce the main speaker or speakers.
- ☐ Invite the media to ask follow-up questions before the formal portion of your event comes to a close. When the last speaker is finished, the person who opened the press conference should do this. After a few minutes of questions, this person should bring the Q&A to a close and thank the media for coming.
- ☐ Ensure that a spokesperson from your organization, a featured speaker, or a subject matter expert is available after the press conference to verify information, answer any remaining follow-up questions, and/or provide one-on-one interviews if needed.
- ☐ If there is an action or photo opportunity planned following the press conference or formal remarks, schedule it to begin immediately following the remarks, and you or your organization's spokesperson should plan to stay at the media event until all of the media have departed. For example, if your media event involves a preparedness scavenger hunt on a college campus, reporters and photographers will stay to get footage of the hunt and interviews with students.



8. FOLLOW UP AFTER THE EVENT

- ☐ Later in the day (if you're holding a morning event) or first thing the next day (if you're holding an afternoon event), send personal messages of thanks to key media representatives who covered or attended your event. This courtesy allows a final chance for reporters to ask follow-up questions and strengthens your media relations, which will be an asset in successfully planning future events.
- ☐ Post photos, information, and/or news stories about your media event on your organization's website and social media channels. Ask partners, participants, and staff to share or retweet these posts and/or post links and information about the event on their own platforms.



MEDIA ADVISORY TEMPLATE

For Immediate Release:
[TODAY'S DATE]

Contact: Media/Community Relations Director
[TELEPHONE]
Subject Matter Expert, Secondary Contact
[TELEPHONE]

MEDIA ADVISORY

[YOUR ORGANIZATION] JOINS NATIONAL PREPAREDNESS MOVEMENT

*Emergency preparedness campaign for action engages
[STUDENTS/EMPLOYEES/ORGANIZATION'S MEMBERSHIP] in a day of action*

[CITY, STATE] – [NAME OF ORGANIZATION] is holding a [DRILL OR INSERT OTHER ACTIVITY] to prepare its [EMPLOYEES, CONGREGANTS, STUDENTS, ETC.] for a [NAME OF HAZARD].

During the event, [NAME OF ORGANIZATION'S CEO, PRINCIPAL, MAYOR, ETC.] will commit to conducting a preparedness activity at least twice a year to emphasize the importance of being disaster resilient. [NAME OF ORGANIZATION] will be joined by other disaster planning and preparedness partners, including [LIST OTHER ORGANIZATIONS] in an event in [CITY, COUNTY, STATE, AND/OR FACILITY].

America's PrepareAthon! is a nationwide, community-based campaign for action to increase emergency preparedness and resilience. Every spring and fall, organizations around the country will focus on preparedness during a national day of action. These national days of action drive participation in hazard-specific drills, group discussions, and exercises. The goals of the campaign are to increase the number of people who understand which disasters could happen in their community, know what to do to be safe and mitigate damage, take action to increase their preparedness, and participate in community resilience planning.

What: Provide description of event/activity

Who: List speakers and other important guests and their organization.

When: Give date/time of your media announcement

Where: Provide location of your media announcement (e.g., City Hall, Corporate Headquarters, including the street address and room number)

###



MEDIA RELEASE TEMPLATE

For Release: [DATE/TIME]

Contact: [NAME/TELEPHONE]

[NAME OF ORGANIZATION] Joins America's PrepareAthon!

Nationwide campaign helps people prepare for disasters.

[CITY, STATE] – [NAME OF ORGANIZATION] is holding a [DRILL OR INSERT OTHER ACTIVITY] to prepare its [EMPLOYEES, CONGREGANTS, STUDENTS, ETC.] for a [NAME OF HAZARD]. While everyone knows it's important to prepare, this [DRILL/ACTIVITY] will ensure that everyone knows exactly what to do in the event of a disaster.

[THE FOLLOWING IS A SUGGESTED QUOTE; PLEASE PERSONALIZE]

"It's important to Be Smart, Take Part, and Prepare for disasters. This [DRILL/ACTIVITY] will help us practice what to do if a [NAME OF HAZARD] comes our way," said [NAME, TITLE, ORGANIZATION].

[INSERT MORE DETAILS ABOUT YOUR PREPAREDNESS DRILL OR ACTIVITY]

President Barack Obama, through Presidential Policy Directive 8 (National Preparedness), directed DHS/FEMA to coordinate, and federal agencies to support, a campaign to build and sustain preparedness through local grassroots implementation. America's PrepareAthon! is a nationwide, community-based campaign for action to increase emergency preparedness and resilience. Every spring and fall, organizations around the country will focus on preparedness during a national day of action. These national days of action drive participation in hazard-specific drills, group discussions, and exercises.

The goals of the campaign are to increase the number of people who understand which disasters could happen in their community, know what to do to be safe and mitigate damage, take action to increase their preparedness, and participate in community resilience planning.

[PICK THE HAZARD THAT APPLIES TO YOUR DRILL/ACTIVITY]

A hurricane warning means that a hurricane is expected to make landfall within 36 hours. By signing up for local alerts and warnings, you can keep abreast of deteriorating weather conditions and be prepared to evacuate, if necessary.

– OR –

A flood warning generally means a flood is expected to affect your area within 24 to 36 hours. By having all of your personal, medical, and legal papers in one place, you can evacuate without worrying about gathering your family's critical documents at the last minute.

– OR –

A wildfire warning generally means fire danger and weather patterns are happening that support wildfires breaking out within 24 hours or less. By having a family communications plan, you can feel confident that everyone in your family is able to communicate with each other and knows what steps to take to prepare to evacuate.



– OR –

A tornado warning will often be issued with less than 15 minutes' notice, so knowing how to get to your protective location is critical.

[FOCUS ON THE HAZARD(S) MOST RELEVANT TO YOUR COMMUNITY AND CITE EXAMPLES OF RECENT LOCAL DISASTERS. EXPLAIN WHAT YOU'RE DOING TO HELP PEOPLE PRACTICE THE STEPS TO PROTECT THEMSELVES.]

[INSERT QUOTE FROM YOUR LOCAL EMERGENCY MANAGER]

America's PrepareAthon! is based on extensive research that shows many Americans are unprepared for disasters, despite many severe weather-related disasters in recent years that have devastated communities.

Preliminary results of a 2013 survey conducted by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) found that three-quarters of the population have not practiced what to do during a disaster by participating in a disaster preparedness exercise or drill in critical locations in the past year:

- 77 percent of the respondents have not practiced a disaster preparedness exercise or drill at home.
- 72 percent of the respondents have not practiced a disaster preparedness exercise or drill at work.
- 83 percent of the respondents have not practiced a disaster preparedness exercise or drill at school.

Building a resilient Nation requires the involvement of the whole community working together to increase individual and community preparedness.

For more information about America's PrepareAthon!, please visit www.ready.gov/prepare or email PrepareAthon@fema.dhs.gov. Join the twitter discussion @PrepareAthon.



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

A letter to the editor is an easy way to make a big impact. Editors don't publish every letter, but they do pay attention—especially to letters that are well-written or connected to an article they just published. In this guide, you'll find a few helpful tips, as well as a template and sample letter.

1. WRITING YOUR LETTER TO THE EDITOR

- **Make it relevant.** Relate your letter to a recent natural or manmade disaster in your state, or perhaps one that happened elsewhere but made national news.
- **Be concise.** The first sentence should summarize your position and reason for writing. One of the biggest mistakes people make in writing letters to the editor is using the first paragraph (or the entire letter) to build to the point. Most editors read two to three sentences before making a decision.
- **Mind your word count.** Check the guidelines for the publication you're targeting. If they give a word count, follow it. If they don't, 200 to 300 words are generally considered the maximum length. Many publications will not consider letters that exceed this word count.

2. SUBMITTING YOUR LETTER TO THE EDITOR

- **Follow the guidelines.** Many publications have specific format requirements, so check the publication's website before submitting your letter. Always include full contact information for the author(s). Follow the publication's rules regarding letters to the editor. Spell everything correctly and pay close attention to grammar—letters are not usually edited, rather the outlets select well-written letters that meet their guidelines. Email your letter to ensure timeliness. To do this, paste the text into the body of an email. **Do not send your letter as an attachment.**
- **Follow up.** Once you've submitted your letter, follow up with a phone call 24 hours later to find out if it will be printed.

SAMPLE LETTER TO THE EDITOR

We've drafted the template on the following page to help guide you. Feel free to use this as a model when you write your own letter. For research data and other helpful information on America's PrepareAthon!, visit www.ready.gov/prepare.



LETTER TO THE EDITOR TEMPLATE

[NAME OF MEDIA OUTLET OR PUBLICATION]

Attention: [NAME OF EDITOR]

[ADDRESS]

[CITY], [STATE] [ZIP CODE]

Dear Editor:

[STATE YOUR REASON FOR WRITING. IF YOU'RE RESPONDING TO ARTICLES OR EDITORIALS BY THE MEDIA OUTLET, USE THE FIRST SENTENCE TO REFERENCE THE TITLE OF THE ARTICLE, THE NAME OF THE PUBLICATION, AND THE DATE IT APPEARED. SEE EXAMPLE CONTENT BELOW.]

I'm writing in response to the article "After the Flood," published by *The Denver Post* on September 17. Communities all across the United States have seen a higher frequency of severe weather and natural disasters in recent years. Coloradans have experienced the effects of disasters firsthand, with devastating wildfires and destructive flooding in the last two years alone. There is a new opportunity to help motivate people here in Denver to take steps to increase their personal safety in case of an emergency.

[MAKE A CALL TO ACTION, ASKING READERS TO FOLLOW UP WITH SOME ACTIVITY, SUCH AS JOINING IN CALLING ON POLICYMAKERS TO ADDRESS THE ISSUE.]

Disasters—manmade and natural—aren't going away. It's time to act. America's PrepareAthon! is a nationwide, community-based campaign to increase emergency preparedness and resilience. Each spring and fall, schools, universities, houses of worship, businesses, and civic organizations across the country will organize days of action in their communities to discuss, practice, and train for relevant hazards.

[STATE YOUR CASE; HIGHLIGHT FACTS, REFERENCES, OR RESEARCH TO ESTABLISH CREDIBILITY.]

According to a 2012 Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) National Survey, only one-third of the respondents reported that they had participated in an emergency drill or exercise in the past two years. Only half of the surveyed individuals reported having supplies for use during a disaster and—despite the rise in disasters nationwide—there has been no substantial increase in the percentage of families who have a household emergency plan since 2007. In this same survey, U.S. residents cited media and community sources as their biggest influencers when it comes to receiving emergency information.

[END WITH A STRONG, POSITIVE STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF YOUR CASE.]

I urge *The Denver Post* and its readers to participate in America's PrepareAthon!, help expand the dialogue on disasters, expand our knowledge of our risks, and—in doing so—create a more resilient Nation.

Sincerely,

[WRITER'S SIGNATURE]

[NAME OF WRITER]

[WRITER'S TITLE]

[WRITER'S ORGANIZATION]



SAMPLE LIVE ANNOUNCER RADIO SCRIPTS

Share these scripts with your local radio stations and ask that announcers read them during their broadcasts. These 10- and 15-second scripts are perfect following a weather or traffic report. Feel free to customize these scripts to include your local activities and information.

60-SECOND SCRIPT

Communities all across the United States are seeing higher frequencies of severe weather and the devastating effects of natural disasters. But many Americans still haven't taken crucial measures to increase their personal safety in case of an emergency. America's PrepareAthon! is asking schools and universities, businesses, houses of worship, and families, just like yours, to practice simple steps to prepare for disasters. It's easy! Go to www-dot-ready-dot-gov-slash-prepare for free information, resources, and guides for hazard-specific drills, group discussions, and exercises. Know the hazards in your area, create a family plan, gather supplies, and more! Be smart, take part, prepare, and join the movement at www-dot-ready-dot-gov-slash-prepare.

30-SECOND SCRIPTS

You can't control when a disaster will strike, but you can be prepared where you live, work, and play. American's are coming together to practice simple steps to prepare for disasters. Know the hazards in your area, create a family plan, gather supplies, and more! Go to www-dot-ready-dot-gov-slash-prepare for free information. Be smart, take part, prepare!

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Bad weather can become dangerous very quickly. Are you and your family prepared to evacuate if you have to? By having all of your personal, medical, and legal papers in one place, you can evacuate without worrying about gathering your family's critical documents at the last minute. Visit www-dot-ready-dot-gov-slash-prepare to download an easy checklist that will help you prioritize the information you need to safeguard in case of an emergency. Having these papers in a secure location will help you and your family get on the road to recovery after a disaster. Visit www-dot-ready-dot-gov-slash-prepare for more information.

15-SECOND SCRIPTS

Be smart, take part, prepare! America's PrepareAthon! is bringing together people like you to practice simple steps to prepare for disasters. Join the movement at www-dot-ready-dot-gov-slash-prepare.

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Do you know what to do when you hear or receive a weather alert? Getting timely information about weather conditions can make all the difference for your safety. Don't leave the safety of you and your loved ones to chance. Download *Be Smart. Know Your Alerts and Warnings* at www-dot-ready-dot-gov-slash-prepare.

#####



Bad weather can become dangerous very quickly. Are you and your family prepared to evacuate if necessary? By having all of your personal, medical, and legal papers in one place, you can evacuate without worrying about gathering your family's critical documents at the last minute. To learn more, visit www.dot-ready-dot-gov-slash-prepare.

#####

Whether you are ready, or not, disasters will strike. Everyone needs an emergency plan. Remember to practice your plan by taking part in a drill. Talk through your plan, step by step, with each member of your family. It is a way to be sure that you aren't missing something important. You can find information for creating your family communications plan at www.dot-ready-dot-gov-slash-prepare.

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Each disaster is different. Each family's needs are different. Start by knowing the risk for your community. Create your emergency plan to include the actions you will take before, during, and after a disaster. Do all you can today to make sure you are prepared for tomorrow. To learn more, visit www.dot-ready-dot-gov-slash-prepare.

10-SECOND SCRIPT

America's PrepareAthon! is bringing together people like you to practice simple steps to prepare for disasters. Join the movement at www.dot-ready-dot-gov-slash-prepare.



PROCLAMATION FOR LOCAL/STATE GOVERNMENT TEMPLATE (OPTION 1)

Customize and present either of these proclamation templates to your town, city, county's local governing body, or your state Governor's office, and ask them to declare an America's PrepareAthon! day of action in your community.

_____ 's PrepareAthon! Proclamation

WHEREAS [STATE/LOCAL NAME]'s PrepareAthon! creates an important opportunity for residents of _____ to be prepared for any type of emergency where they live, work, and play; and

WHEREAS taking steps toward personal preparedness and ensuring that our households, workplaces, schools, institutions of higher learning, houses of worship, and community-based organizations are prepared for disaster can reduce fatalities and economic devastation following a major crisis; and

WHEREAS participating in _____ 's PrepareAthon will increase the number of citizens who understand which disasters could happen in our community; and

WHEREAS our citizens will know what to do to be safe and mitigate damage; and

WHEREAS the citizens of _____ will take action to increase their preparedness; and

WHEREAS our [INSERT STATE, CITY, TOWN, COUNTY, ETC.] will participate in community resilience planning; and

WHEREAS the [LOCAL DIVISION OF HOMELAND SECURITY AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT OFFICE, AMERICAN RED CROSS, FEMA REGIONAL OFFICE, ETC.] _____ and other Federal, State, local, tribal, territorial, private, and volunteer agencies are working to increase public activities in preparing for emergencies and to encourage individuals to take action; and

WHEREAS emergency preparedness is the responsibility of every citizen of _____ and all citizens are urged to make preparedness a priority and work together to ensure that individuals, families, and communities are prepared for disasters and emergencies of any type; and

WHEREAS participating in [STATE/LOCAL NAME]'s PrepareAthon! will ensure that our community becomes a leader in preparedness and contributes to our Nation's resilience.

Therefore, I, [NAME/TITLE OF ELECTED OFFICIAL] _____,
do hereby proclaim [DATE, WEEK, OR MONTH] _____, as
[STATE/LOCAL NAME]'s PrepareAthon! day of action.



PROCLAMATION FOR LOCAL/STATE GOVERNMENT TEMPLATE (OPTION 2)

_____’s PrepareAthon! Proclamation

Commending [STATE/LOCAL NAME]’s PrepareAthon! and recognizing [DATE], as [STATE/LOCAL NAME]’s PrepareAthon! Day.

WHEREAS [STATE/LOCAL]’s PrepareAthon! creates an important opportunity for residents and businesses of [STATE/LOCAL NAME] to be prepared for any type of emergency where they live, work, and play; and

WHEREAS the event helps residents take steps toward personal preparedness and ensures that families, workplaces, schools, early childhood learning institutions, houses of worship, and community organizations are able to increase their ability to survive a disaster and reduce economic devastation following a major crisis; and

WHEREAS the [STATE/LOCAL NAME]’s Emergency Management Agency, Citizen Corps Council, and other Federal, State, local, private, and volunteer agencies are working to increase public activities in preparing for emergencies and to encourage individuals to take action; and

WHEREAS emergency preparedness is the responsibility of every citizen of [STATE/LOCAL NAME] and all citizens are urged to make preparedness a priority and work together to ensure that individuals, families, and communities are prepared for disasters and emergencies of any type; and

WHEREAS all citizens and businesses of [STATE/LOCAL NAME] are encouraged to participate in preparedness activities and asked to visit www.ready.com/prepare and register to become more prepared; and

WHEREAS participating in [STATE/LOCAL]’s PrepareAthon! will ensure that our community becomes a national leader in whole-community preparedness.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE [STATE/LOCAL REPRESENTATIVE BODY] that the members of this body commend [STATE/LOCAL NAME]’s PrepareAthon! and recognize [DATE, WEEK, OR MONTH], as [STATE/LOCAL NAME]’s PrepareAthon! Day.